

HARBOR AT PETERSBURG, VA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

RELATIVE TO

The improvement of the harbor at Petersburg, Va.

JANUARY 21, 1880.—Referred to the Committee on Commerce and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, January 17, 1880.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the House of Representatives, for the information of the Committee on Commerce, copy of letter dated the 12th instant, from Maj. W. P. Craighill, Corps of Engineers, and accompanying copy of preamble and resolutions adopted by the council of the city of Petersburg, Va., relative to the improvement of the harbor at that city; also, the letter of the Chief of Engineers, submitting same to the department.

ALEX. RAMSEY,
Secretary of War.

The SPEAKER
of the House of Representatives.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, D. C., January 16, 1880.

SIR: I beg leave respectfully to submit the inclosed copy of a letter of Maj. William P. Craighill, Corps of Engineers, dated January 12, 1880, transmitting copy of preamble and resolutions adopted by the council of the city of Petersburg, Va., relative to the improvement of the harbor at that city, and to recommend that it be sent to the House of Representatives for the information of the Committee on Commerce.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. G. WRIGHT,
Chief of Engineers, Brig. and Bvt. Maj. Gen., U. S. A.

HON. ALEXANDER RAMSEY,
Secretary of War.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE HARBOR OF PETERSBURG, VA.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Baltimore, January 12, 1880.

GENERAL: I have the honor to inclose a copy of a preamble and resolution adopted by the council of the city of Petersburg.

There has been much urgency developed to have the United States improve "the harbor of Petersburg." The facts mentioned below are respectfully submitted for your consideration.

First, a perusal of my last annual report on the Appomattox is requested.

A freshet of considerable height and duration occurred in December, 1879, the first one after the completion of a number of wing-dams and training-walls in the Petersburg division of the river. Such a freshet always tests new work severely and points out defects in strength or arrangement if any are to be found. It is gratifying to be able to say that the river has never stood so well after such a freshet since my connection with it of nearly ten years, and I am satisfied that the completion of the system of wing-dams and training-walls proposed will be successful in maintaining a far better channel than has ever before been known. This system can be completed with the money asked for in my last annual report, and could and would have been completed years ago and at 60 per cent. of its ultimate cost, if the money had been granted in gross or larger sums instead of being doled out in small annual sums.

Two tracings are forwarded herewith, showing the upper portion of the Appomattox, including the "harbor of Petersburg."

This harbor is only a portion of the river itself in front of the town.

What those want who are urging the improvement of the harbor is *dredging*, either at the wharves belonging to the city or individuals. Too much money has already been spent by the United States in resort to this temporary expedient, but no dredging up to this time has ever been done at any wharves. I am decidedly of the opinion that none should be. The city should dredge its own wharves, and individuals should dredge theirs, as they have done in the past. The reason why special urgency has lately been shown to have the United States dredge near town is that the state of the river has been so much better than ever before, and vessels have increased their loads and come to the edge of the town without lightening or difficulty, but they find themselves stopped in the town and cannot approach the wharves, where is their only harbor.

The proper way of improving the "harbor of Petersburg" is by the use of the same means used successfully below. The harbor is only a portion of the river, and an unnatural depth of eight or ten feet at low water (what they want) can never be had except by constant dredging, with the present width.

The river commerce of Petersburg is at present confined almost entirely to the south side. There are two methods of improvement which suggest themselves, having in view the ideas mentioned above; both, however, based upon the same principle, the contraction of the width of the water way. One of these methods is to build a bulkhead or training-wall on the north side, the other is to build wing-dams at such intervals as would allow their conversion into wharves with slips between. The latter method is decidedly the best for obvious reasons, when we consider that we are improving or making a harbor and want as much room as we can get. As a preliminary to either method, the United States should have the privilege, granted in perpetuity, of con-

structing such works as were necessary in the judgment of the Chief of Engineers, without claims for damages from the owners of the soil.

The cost of each of these methods would be about the same, viz, \$25,000, not including cost of procuring the soil or the consent of riparian owners for the construction of works.

Immediate relief by dredging could be had by the expenditure of about \$4,000, but this relief would be only temporary, and the dredged channel likely to fill up at the first severe freshet, and to fill in time without freshets, if nothing else be done.

The amount now available for the Appomattox is \$6,500, all of which is needed elsewhere on the river than in the "harbor." I have never considered the improvement of the "harbor" while estimating for the river. I think, under the circumstances, the city itself should take care of its own harbor. It is enough for the United States to improve the channel of the river up to the harbor.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. P. CRAIGHILL,
Major of Engineers.

Brig. Gen. H. G. WRIGHT,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.

PREAMBLE AND RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF PETERSBURG,
VIRGINIA.

COUNCIL CHAMBER.
OFFICE OF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL,
Petersburg, Va., December 2, 1879.

At a meeting of the common council of the city of Petersburg, held December 1, 1879, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

"Whereas the common council of the city of Petersburg, recognizing the efficient manner in which Col. W. P. Craighill, of the Corps of Engineers, United States Army, and his assistants, Capt. J. W. Cuyler, United States Army, and Henry D. Bird, esq., civil engineer, and all employes under them, have contributed to the improvement of the Appomattox River during the past few years, with the appropriations made therefor, from time to time, by the Congress of the United States; and whereas, whilst recognizing the vast importance of this work, from both a national and local standpoint, we feel that the financial status of our city is at this time such as to render the further improvement of the river, and the dredging requisite to place our harbor in a condition necessary for its safe navigation, impossible: Therefore,

"Be it resolved, 1. That we tender Colonel Craighill and his assistants our cordial thanks for their valuable services to the city of Petersburg in the work already done.

"2. That he be requested to do all in his power to further the work, so admirably conducted thus far, and to extend it, if possible, so as to embrace the city harbor.

"3. That a committee of three be appointed to communicate with Colonel Craighill, and convey to him a copy of the foregoing preamble and resolutions."

A copy. Teste:

F. R. RUPELL,
Clerk Council.

Col. WM. P. CRAIGHILL,
Major, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

